

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows. The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions.

1. (Withdrawn – Currently Amended) A method for producing the plant of claim 20 comprising transforming a plant cell with an miRNA precursor construct, said construct comprising a promoter functional in a plant cell, wherein the promoter is operably linked to a nucleotide sequence encoding an isolated plant miRNA precursor, ~~said plant miRNA precursor comprising an exogenous miRNA sequence that replaces an endogenous miRNA sequence and a strand opposite the exogenous miRNA sequence, wherein the isolated plant miRNA precursor has been modified by~~
 - (a) ~~replacing an endogenous miRNA sequence of the isolated plant miRNA precursor with an [[the]] exogenous miRNA sequence that maintains the length of the endogenous miRNA sequence; and~~
 - (b) ~~modifying nucleotides the strand opposite the exogenous miRNA sequence in the isolated plant miRNA precursor is modified to maintain [[the]] double strandedness and mismatches secondary structure of the plant miRNA precursor including double strandedness and any mismatches,~~

and further wherein the exogenous miRNA sequence is complementary to a target mRNA sequence within said plant and, following processing from said precursor, hybridizes with [[a]]~~the~~ target mRNA nucleotide sequence within said plant, whereby the expression of the target sequence is reduced.
2. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said first target sequence is an endogenous plant sequence.
3. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said first target sequence is an exogenous sequence.
4. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said first target sequence is selected from the group consisting of genes involved in the synthesis

and/or degradation of proteins, peptides, fatty acids, lipids, waxes, oils, starches, sugars, carbohydrates, flavors, odors, toxins, carotenoids, hormones, polymers, flavinoids, storage proteins, phenolic acids, alkaloids, lignins, tannins, celluloses, glycoproteins, and glycolipids.

5. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein said first promoter is selected from the group consisting of a constitutive promoter, tissue-preferred promoter, and an inducible promoter.

6-19. (Canceled).

20. (Currently Amended) A plant stably transformed with an miRNA precursor construct, said miRNA precursor construct comprising a promoter functional in a plant cell, wherein the promoter is operably linked to a nucleotide sequence encoding an isolated plant miRNA precursor, ~~said plant miRNA precursor comprising an exogenous miRNA sequence that replaces an endogenous miRNA sequence and a strand opposite the exogenous miRNA sequence, wherein the isolated plant miRNA precursor has been modified by~~

(a) replacing an endogenous miRNA sequence of the isolated plant miRNA precursor with an[[the]] exogenous miRNA sequence that maintains the length of the endogenous miRNA sequence; and

(b) modifying nucleotides the strand opposite the exogenous miRNA sequence in the isolated plant miRNA precursor is modified to maintain [[the]] double strandedness and mismatches secondary structure of the plant miRNA precursor including double strandedness and any mismatches,

and further wherein the exogenous miRNA sequence is complementary to a target mRNA sequence within said plant and, following processing from said plant miRNA precursor, hybridizes with [[a]]the target mRNA nucleotide sequence within said plant, whereby the expression of the target sequence is reduced.

21-22. (Canceled).

23. (Currently Amended) A plant cell stably transformed with an miRNA precursor construct, said miRNA precursor construct comprising a promoter functional in a plant cell, wherein the promoter is operably linked to a nucleotide sequence encoding an isolated plant miRNA precursor, ~~said plant miRNA precursor comprising an exogenous miRNA sequence that replaces an endogenous miRNA sequence and a strand opposite the exogenous miRNA sequence, wherein the isolated plant miRNA precursor has been modified by~~

(a) replacing an endogenous miRNA sequence of the isolated plant miRNA precursor with an[[the]] exogenous miRNA sequence that maintains the length of the endogenous miRNA sequence; and

(b) modifying nucleotides~~the strand~~ opposite the exogenous miRNA sequence in the isolated plant miRNA precursor ~~is modified to maintain [[the]] double strandedness and mismatches~~ secondary structure of the plant miRNA precursor ~~including double strandedness and any mismatches,~~

and further wherein the exogenous miRNA sequence is complementary to a target mRNA sequence within said plant and, following processing from said plant miRNA precursor, hybridizes with [a] the target mRNAnucleotide sequence within said plant, whereby the expression of the target sequence is reduced.

24-25. (Canceled).

26. (Original) Transformed seed of the plant of claim 20.